

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-11. (cancelled)

12. (new) A method for installing an optical fiber unit with reduced static electricity, comprising the steps of:

supplying an optical fiber unit at an entrance of an installation tube; and

providing ionized gas into the tube as the optical fiber is advanced within the tube.

13. (new) The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of ionizing the gas.

14. (new) The method of claim 13 wherein the gas is compressed before being ionized.

15. (new) The method of claim 13 wherein the gas is ionized before being compressed.

16. (new) The method of claim 12 wherein the concentration of ions in the gas is controlled so as to remain constant with time.

17. (new) The method of claim 12 wherein the concentration of ions in the gas is controlled so as to increase with time.

18. (new) The method of claim 13 wherein the gas is ionized using a corona-discharge ionizer.

19. (new) The method of claim 13 wherein the gas is ionized using a light-irradiating ionizer.

20. (new) A method for installing an optical fiber unit with reduced static electricity, comprising the steps of:

supplying an optical fiber unit at an entrance of an installation tube;

injecting ions into a gas; and

providing the ion-injected gas into the tube as the optical fiber unit advances along the tube.

21. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein the concentration of ions in the gas is controlled so as to remain constant with time.

22. (new) The method of claim 20 wherein the concentration of ions in the gas is controlled so as to increase with time.

23. (new) An apparatus for installing an optical fiber unit, comprising:

an optical fiber unit supplier;

a blowing head having an entrance for introducing the optical fiber unit supplied from the optical fiber unit supplier and an exit communicating with the entrance and including a gas-pressure installation tube;

a compressor for compressing and then supplying an optical fiber unit installation gas to the optical fiber unit introduced into the blowing head; and

an ionizer for ionizing the optical fiber unit installation gas.

24. (new) The apparatus for installing an optical fiber unit according to claim 23, wherein the ionizer is disposed at the rear of the compressor so as to ionize the gas compressed by the compressor.

25. (new) The apparatus for installing an optical fiber unit according to claim 23, wherein the compressor is disposed at the rear of the ionizer so as to compress the gas ionized by the ionizer.

26. (new) The apparatus for installing an optical fiber unit according to claim 23, further comprising:

driving wheels rotating at both sides of the supplied optical fiber unit so as to push the optical fiber unit into the installation tube.

27. (new) The apparatus for installing an optical fiber unit according to claim 23, further comprising:

a sealing unit positioned at the entrance of the blowing head to surround an outer circumference of the optical fiber unit with a predetermined gap from the optical fiber unit.

28. (new) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the ionizer is a corona-discharge ionizer.

29. (new) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the ionizer is a light-irradiating ionizer.

30. (new) The apparatus of claim 23 further comprising a buckling sensor.

31. (new) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the pressure of the installation gas is in the range of 10 to 15 atm.